



February 23, 2000

FEB 28 2000

Re: **Response to Federal Caucus concerning the Columbia Basin Fish "All-H Paper". Public meeting held February 23, 2000 Boise Idaho.**

Gentlemen:

United Water Idaho, an investor owned utility, is the largest municipal water supplier in the Treasure Valley. The company provides service to meet the needs of approximately 185,000 people over a 160 square mile area and provided over 15.8 billion gallons in 1999. Total source capacity is rated at 92 million gallons per day and comes from 89 wells and 1 water treatment plant.

Your associated agencies recognize, I hope, that to commit substantial amounts of storage or natural flow water in Idaho to a river flow augmentation program for salmon and steelhead is to restrict, and ultimately to place limits on, our ability to serve homes, businesses and communities in Idaho. This program has a potentially huge economic and environmental impact on this state, and I urge you to fully evaluate those impacts in your review of options regarding the endangered fish issue.

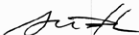
We already are seeing the effects of this "regulatory drought" in the Boise area, where our growing communities need new sources of drinking water. In our company alone, we project a need for an additional thousand (1000) acre-feet of surface water each year to serve our growing customer base, and it is getting much more difficult to obtain it. We will be able to continue to develop some ground water at a modest pace, however, we have never been able just to drill another well in any part of the Valley and expect to fulfill our needs. The ongoing Treasure Valley Hydrologic Study is confirming that the outlook for future ground water development is becoming even less certain. Many areas have declining or insufficient ground water supplies, while others have water quality problems. The State of Idaho is making decisions about conjunctive water management which means drilling in other areas may raise future concerns with regard to vested senior surface water rights. We are finding it difficult to obtain any entitlement to use of the stored water in reservoirs such as Lucky Peak just upriver from Boise. The 40-year space contracts for 71,000 acre-feet will be expiring over the next 5 years and discussions of how or who can **prove** beneficial use of the water are beginning. We simply must be allowed to contract for at least a modest amount of surface storage to serve our future needs.

We believe that the flow augmentation program is not of clear benefit or value in addressing the problems facing salmon and steelhead. Nonetheless, the Bureau of

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Reclamation and Corp of Engineers seemingly are under great pressure to place such uses of this water at the top of its list. We sincerely hope that this trend will not worsen, and that municipal water providers will be given fair and reasonable access to surface water rights and storage reservoirs to serve our current and future water needs. Please give attention in your review of this issue.

Sincerely,



Scott Rhead
Managing Engineer

cc: Greg Wyatt
Ben Hepler
Jeff Fereday, G-P
Jerry Gregg, B.O.R.